

## [George and Cora Brauscom]

Sept. 15, 1939.

George and Cora Brauscom (white)

Drunkard Preacher and wife

Adyleen G. Merrick, writer

Dudley W. Crawford, reviser. Original names: Changed names:

George Brauscom John Bacon

Melvin Hill Mint Hill

Polk County Pike County

Columbus Comden

Bettie Madden Bessie Miller

Reed Ruff

Etta Reed Eva Ruff

Washington Dove Franklin Davis

Cora Brauscom Callie Bacon

Mrs. Stacy Mrs. Starnes C9-[?][?]

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Well back from the dusty country road stood the home of Preacher Bacon. Dormer windows of the second story looked out over the front yard where chestnut and pecan trees of great size gave evidence of having been planted many years ago. A white picket fence, grown weathered by the years, enclosed the yard and guarded the roadway along its south west border. In one corner, facing the road, stood a one room log cabin, which had been the first Post Office of Mint Hill.

Mischevicious crows were stealing nuts from the trees and making a great racket about it, their loud 'caws' filled the afternoon air with discordant notes.

Leaves fell from the trees and drifted down into the flower beds below and littered the straight walk which led to the house.

From the porch, where flowers grew in many pots of different sizes, an old man could be seen rocking contentedly, his snowwhite hair shone in the afternoon light.

He rose at the approach of a stranger and came slowly down the path. Tall and venerable yet giving the impression of great fitness and strength.

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A smile wreathed his kindly face, as he extended a hand, toil-worn but shapely. Deep blue eyes, looking out from beneath his heavy brows, were full of question; yet welcome was there also. Below his lip, upon which a smile lingered was a straight white beard, worn as is the Dunkard custom, and matching in whiteness the crown of hair which appeared to have been tumbled into disarray by a restless hand. This was John Bacon, venerable Dunkard preacher, whose eighty five years sat lightly upon his broad shoulders.

"I give ye welcome, stranger," he said. "The day's warm, might be ye'd like to come sit on the porch and rest a while. What did you say? I'm sort of deaf, my hearing hampers me a heap of late, I don't allers get the all of what folks sez to me. We'll go set down and if ye

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talk right at me I reckon I'll get the run of what ye are saying, most times I do if I listen right well.

"Git away cat! Cats everywhere! I could abide them lots better if they weren't forever under foot. 'Course we must put up with them else the rats would overrun the place. Have this chair and lay aside your hat so the breeze can cool ye; the summer has been uncommon hard to bear with so much heat. I reckon ye find that's so from where ye come from too, same as we do here.

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"Yes mam", I've lived right here in Pike County most all my life. I used to teach schools then I tuck to preaching. I've had to quit now though on account I'm so deaf. I just make out to farm a little; I own nigh about sixty acres - it's enough to plant fur all our needs.

"Pa come to this section from Washington County Tenn. when I was about three years old. We made our way over the mountains along the old cattle trail. I can remember how we rode his claybank horse right along side the wagons. Ma and the boys took turns driving. It took us the better part of three days too, gitting from Washington County to where we stopped at Comden, North Carolina; long hard driving over a road you wouldn't even call a road now-a-days. There were five of us boys and five girls, a good big family. We made camp along the way when the shadders fell and Pa kept watch fer fear of [?] [him?] .

"Pa was a singing teacher, that's how come he met ma, she was wishing to learn and joined his singing class.

"I can't remember Ma any too good, she died when I was about five years old, seems like she was jest Ma, but that's all, I reckon it's because I have to think back so fur, I'm gitting along in years Lady, I was the youngest of the ten children, they have all of them gone to meet their God but me.

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Some days I feel as if I'd been here too long. I git lonesome with jest me left. What did you say, Mam? Guess I didn't get that. When did my wife die? Why let me see, 'bout five years ago, Mam?"

From the doorway emerged an energetic little old lady, who from the beginning of the visit had been restlessly moving around the house; that she had been listening was apparent for she fairly bristled with suppressed interest, her feet made a quick tip-tap as she came forward.

The old man looked up with an expression of relief when he saw her. "Make you acquainted with Mrs. Starnes she stays here and looks after me."

A puzzled expression crossed the woman's face, fleeting yet definite, then she smiled a greeting as she sat down near by and launched rapidly into conversation, giving a hint of what puzzled her.

"I've been listening, and I know jest how hard a time ye were having trying to make Preacher understand. By time he got it into his head what ye was asking him night would fall. Preacher's getting awful deaf.

"Why yes mam, I'll be glad to tell you all I can about Preacher. I've known him well since I were about nine years old. He's a mighty good God-fearing man, never says no bad words ner by words to my knowing, don't drink now, ner never did. He's awful kind to me, allers was.

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"I heard him preach his first sermon in 1876, that was before I was old enough to join the church. I'm heap younger than he be.

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"Preacher came to Mint Hill when he was about twenty-one, he was gitting up writing schools for a man and would go ahead of him to see how many pupils he could gather together before Mr. Taylor come along. Pa subscribed for four of us.

After Preacher come he settled here and went to work at the gold mine. No mam, that's all, I ever heard it called, jest gold mine. If it were ever called anything else it's not been named to me. Right smart gold was took out of the mine for a couple of years 'till they struck quick sand and had to quit mining.

"Jest about this time he met Bessie Miller, she was his first wife. Bessie was pretty and she was smart too. She died soon after they was married, their little son died too. Pore Preacher, he tuck on turrible. We all felt sorry for him.

"After that Preacher started teaching school. I remember well the day he said he would slap me good if I didn't behave, but he never did, he was allers kind and gentle.

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"About six years after Bessie died a family by the name of Ruff straggled into our county, and came here to Mint Hill. I can't jest remember how they got here, seems like they said they were on their way to some place west. Mighty nice people they were too. They were the first Dunkards to come to Pike County. Preacher got awful struck with Miss-Eva Ruff, we kept oggling around to see what he would do. Well, he musta made good time with his courting fur soon after they moved on to Asheville Preacher went up there and got her. They were married over fifty years. Miss Eva made Preacher a mighty fine wife, though she allers seemed queer to us with her yankee ways which differed from ours.

"After he married Miss Eva, Preacher got all tuck up with the Dunkard religion, he talked it all around. The mother church agreed to send two preachers to hold meetings if eight families would agree to come. Well, they agreed. I was one of the first to notice, and I tuck in with them. We had the first meeting in the school house over yonder on the hill. Franklin

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Davis preached the first sermon, after that eight or nine joined. We have about a hundred and fifty members now in jest one of the five country churches. Folks in these parts had never heard of our religion then, though it don't differ much from theirs.

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We [?] immerse three times stid of jest once, at baptism. One time in the name of the Father, once for his Son and once for the Holy Ghost.

I used to feel sorry for preacher when we had big baptisms yonder on the river, after revival meetings, with so many joining up, and having to dip each Brother or Sister three times. Preacher allers said the "Grace of God sustained him" I reckon it did.

"Preacher was ordained after he had preached a year, and he's gone from one to the other of all the five Brethern churches in Pike County.

"Why are they called by that name?"

"Why Sister, don't ye know Christ said, 'Ye are all Brethern, ye shall all be called by a name which the Lord shall name.' That's where Brethern church come from, it's in the Holy Bible."

Occasionally, as the conversation continued, the old man would smile and nod approval, having now and then caught an enlightening word or two. He seemed pleased. With a gesture of hospitality he reached deep in his pocket and produced a handful of large brown chestnuts which he proffered with a smile. "Have some, Won't ye? he said. " Don't give the Lady them raw chestnuts, Preacher, they'll cause her misery! I'll give ye some boiled ones 8 before ye go that are fit to eat, you save those to plant."

"Well, honey, after Miss Eva died things was awful bad for preacher. I guess he never done much for himself, he's allers been right helpless like. There was the big old rambling

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house, seven cows to ten, chickens and pigs to care for and all the dozen and one things to do about a farm. Preacher just got snowed under in no time.

“Finally, he hired a woman to come work for him. My! but she was shiftless, I can't say how things would have turned out if preacher hadn't gotten gored by that bull, and came nigh to dying. That was a plum pitiful time, they took him to the hospital and not much hope was given out. I'd said I'd stay on at the house and do all I could. I was a widder woman and I had my son and his wife living with me so I was free to go.

“After preacher come home he bogged along the best he could with the help of the neighbors. I'd meet him once in a while and I'd say, " How you, Brother Bacon? " ' Don't feel well. ' he'd allers say.

“Before long, he begun dropping by my house oftener then common. My son says to me, " Ma, what you reckon makes preacher come so often? " I never caught on ner Lee neither.

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“One day he come and he says to my grandchild: 'Where's Callie (that's ma).' She says, 'Out by the fish pond.' I can't just remember what I was doing when he come along and says to me, 'Callie, I want to ask ye a question? I've decided to get married and you're the one.' I was so surprised I jest sat right down on the wet grass and stared at him. I thought he'd [?] gone daft. Preacher just stood there smiling down at me and awaiting my answer. I says to him, “Why, preacher I'm right surprised and flattered too, but you look around a while longer.

“Well he kept coming to see me, the family got awful worried, I wouldn't tell it that we were courting, but one day my grandchild evedropped on us, she heard him say to me, “Callie, aint' ye never going to make up yer mind to set the day and marry me?

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"I baffled him off a while longer, then I give in. Preacher seemed awful tickled when I told him I didn't see nothing to hinder us. He said soon as it quit raining he'd saddle and ride to town and take out papers. This was sort of putting it on me pretty fast.

"One day soon after that the sun came out and Preacher, good as his word, hit the road for town to get the license. I was ready fur I knew he'd go. Then I told my son, he 10 was powerful put out, but his wife made him hush and said I was old enough to know my own mind. She souldn't let him fret me any more.

"We was all blustering around straightening the parlor when Preacher come and brought the minister along to marry us. For a woman my age, I got awful flustered. I hadn't looked for them so soon. We were married so quick I hardly knew how it all was, it fairly took my breath away; my head just swam. I was Mrs. Bacon 'fore I knew it.

"I had my satchel all packed with my night gown and sich (I planned to come back home next day and pack up leisure like.) We come on over here in Preacher's buggy. I've been here ever since.

The neighbors had rid up the house real nice and dinner was set out for all. I was real pleased. I ain't never had no cause to be sorry I said yes to Preacher, excepting when he forgits, like he done jest now, and introduces me to strangers as Mrs. Starnes. Law me, but that worries me? His memory is failing fast, sometimes I'm afraid for fear he'll git not to know me no more.

Silence fell.

Preacher Bacon took notice of this, and looking up with a smile proffered this information. "I shore done well by myself when I won Callie, there ain't no better 11 woman living." An expression of delight came into his wife's eyes, her cheeks turned pink with pleasure.



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Quickly leaning forward she gently patted the Preacher's hand, whom she must have loved all along through the years from childhood to old age.